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Strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/182 of 19 December 1991, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly on the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance, and to Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56 of 28 July 1995, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive report on humanitarian assistance, and to subsequent resolutions.

2. The report is also submitted in response to the requests contained in General Assembly resolution 55/164 of 14 December 2000 on strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations.

3. The report documents the implementation of the agreed conclusions of the 1998 and 1999 humanitarian affairs segment of the Economic and Social Council.

II. Overview

4. It is now almost 10 years since the General Assembly adopted its resolution 46/182 with the goal of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of United Nations humanitarian operations in the field. Significantly, in the resolution, the Assembly instituted the Emergency Relief Coordinator, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, the Central Emergency Revolving Fund and the consolidated appeals process.

5. Since 1991, the humanitarian community has increasingly had to operate in rapidly changing and deteriorating humanitarian environments. Internal conflicts have characterized most of the past decade's humanitarian emergencies. However, the world's understanding of and response to them has evolved. The international media can now conduct more or less constant live reporting as disasters and emergencies unfold. This has led to decision makers and the general public being more aware of the devastating and widespread effects of certain crises and has motivated more rapid responses. An unfortunate corollary to this is that countries in crisis not under the media spotlight may struggle to receive the necessary resources.

6. The presence of humanitarian and other international actors in areas of crisis has increased dramatically and the spectrum of their activities broadened. In the 1990s, the United Nations has increasingly been expected to provide assistance in areas affected by internal armed conflicts, through a system that was never designed or staffed to undertake these often ill-fated tasks. In fulfilling their mandates, humanitarian workers have moved ever closer to the conflict and are now frequently surrounded by it in their daily activities, often at great risk and sometimes unacceptably, with fatal consequences. Peacekeeping operations have been launched, sometimes before the existence of any real peace, placing peacekeepers and humanitarians side by side in their efforts to address and mitigate the consequences of conflict. Responses called for by the international community from humanitarians have broadened from providing basic humanitarian assistance, such as food, shelter and health care, to engaging in negotiations with both State and non-State actors for access and the ability to provide assistance to an increasingly targeted civilian population.

7. In many instances, massive forced displacement has become a common feature of the fighting to gain control of territory or resources and has even been an aim in itself in conflicts motivated by ethnic cleansing. The level of violence perpetrated against civilians has reached frightening levels. Rape has become a more common method of warfare. Children are not only caught in the conflict but have increasingly been conscripted into it. Those who are not forced to become combatants are targeted, victimized and displaced with growing frequency. The children that survive do so with less hope of a future with access to basic health services, education, clean water and food security.

8. Since the end of the cold war, warring parties have more frequently used ethnic and religious differences or different interpretations of history to fuel conflicts. As a result, violations of human rights and humanitarian law often lie at the heart of a humanitarian emergency. At the same time, many of these conflicts pivot around the struggle for power, security, resources and even narcotics, which has, in no small measure, contributed to the prolongation of conflicts in many countries and created a "war economy". Equally disturbing is the trend of neighbouring countries being dragged into or implicating themselves in internal conflicts. The multiplication of parties and the resulting several fronts have made it yet more difficult for humanitarian

workers to have access to the civilian population and huge numbers of the vulnerable members of that population are cut off from all forms of assistance.

9. All this has made political solutions difficult to realize, particularly where some elements or key players have found war or instability to be more lucrative than peace. It has also made the humanitarian environment in such countries more dangerous, as many of the players have scant respect for international humanitarian or human rights law or the safety of humanitarian workers. Combined with inadequate State and community structures, weakened or destroyed because of conflict, these political and socio-economic factors have exacerbated the vulnerability of populations by weakening local economic activities and coping strategies.

10. The past decade has also witnessed an exponential growth in the occurrence of disasters. In 1999 alone, there were more than 700 large-scale disasters, resulting in the death of approximately 100,000 people and causing economic losses in excess of US$ 100 billion. While all countries are susceptible to natural hazards, developing countries are much more severely affected, especially in terms of the loss of lives and the percentage of economic losses in relation to their gross national product. Ninety per cent of disaster victims live in developing countries. The cause of the widespread loss of life and damage resulting from natural disasters is linked to the increasing number of people and assets which are vulnerable to disasters. This is owing to a number of factors, including the increased concentration of populations in areas of accelerated urbanization, and poverty, which often forces people to live in geographically unstable locations and in inadequate shelters. The cyclical nature of some disasters has left large populations chronically vulnerable. In other instances, other factors, such as inappropriate land use planning, poorly designed buildings and infrastructure, lack of appropriate institutional arrangements to deal with risk reduction, and an increasingly degraded environment, epitomized by widespread deforestation, are all linked to the current trend towards increased vulnerability.

11. Over the past ten years, the United Nations has become stronger in its responses. The Security Council has become more closely engaged with humanitarian agendas, such as the protection of civilians in conflict, the humanitarian aspect of sanctions, the protection of children in armed conflict, the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in conflict and the need to incorporate gender perspectives in peace support operations. The United Nations system as a whole has continued to develop different mechanisms for achieving its humanitarian aims and has explored ways to link the different aspects of its humanitarian mandate into broader development and peace-building frameworks.

12. The response to natural disasters has also been heightened by the engagement of a variety of actors with broad ranging expertise. The benefits of technology have been explored to locate and assist the victims of catastrophe, share information on needs both broadly and rapidly, and ensure efficient deployment of people and resources. Greater effort has gone into strengthening the capacity of regional, national and local authorities in disaster-prone areas to plan and prepare for disaster and thus mitigate its consequences when it strikes.

13. A snapshot of the consolidated appeals process illustrates the increasing number and complexity of humanitarian emergencies during the last decade. When consolidated appeals were first issued in 1994, $1.4 billion was requested to cover 11 complex emergencies. For 2001, the United Nations and its humanitarian partners have issued 19 consolidated appeals, covering 24 complex emergencies and 8 drought-affected countries, seeking some $2.8 billion. While not all emergencies have been or are the subject of a consolidated appeal, six of today's crises have been appealed for every year since the consolidated appeals process was introduced. In general, the number of protracted emergencies has grown, meaning that large segments of the population in those countries and regions remain chronically vulnerable and dependent on or in need of outside aid. Huge numbers of people have been displaced several times. Many more have not been able to return to their homes at all for very long periods of time and thousands of refugees have been born in exile, making their eventual integration yet more difficult. This demonstrates that humanitarian assistance is not a solution in itself. It cannot be a substitute for political action.

14. There are many constraints and challenges encountered in the delivery of humanitarian assistance, some of which are well known. A failure to plan early for and improve the transition between relief and development can undo positive short-term results. Without shelter, refugees and displaced cannot return to re-establish their communities. Lack of employment

or economic opportunities hinders already vulnerable populations from again becoming self-sufficient. In post-conflict situations, lack of security or sustainability can plunge societies back into violence. Combatants need to be disarmed, demobilized and reintegrated. Without demining, landmines will continue to kill and disable, and to prevent access to important land resources and infrastructure. Although, not all of these issues can be fully addressed by humanitarian organizations, they have an impact on humanitarian operations and thus require linkages with political, military and other actors.

15. Key to the success of humanitarian action is the coordinated efforts of all players, backed by the political will and support of Member States. Member States have continued to be generous in their response both to natural disasters and complex emergencies, not only in financial terms but also in the provision of personnel and technical support. Yet there are significant needs that remain unmet. At the same time, opportunities to develop more efficient and effective responses exist, along with ways to support the most affected countries in preparing for and responding strongly to the crises that afflict them.

16. In the light of the changed and changing humanitarian environment, it is useful to examine whether the tools created 10 years ago by the General Assembly in its resolution 46/182 to improve coordination and response in humanitarian crises have adapted accordingly. During the past decade, there has been a greater commitment to coordination. More effort is put into deciding coordination arrangements and many have been regularized. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the consolidated appeals process are key examples. But the response to each crisis identifies new lessons to be learned and there are still many challenges to the coordination of humanitarian assistance to be met.

III. Context and challenges of humanitarian assistance, 2000-2001

A. Natural disasters

17. Natural disasters repeatedly strike many of the same regions and countries in an almost predictable manner. Widespread drought in the Horn of Africa threatened 12.3 million people in many parts of the region, including Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. Severe drought in the first half of 2000 also afflicted much of central and southern Asia, particularly Afghanistan, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and the Caucasian countries of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. This resulted in significant losses of livestock and crops and rapid deterioration of health and sanitary conditions. In addition, Afghanistan's Herat province was hit by a cold wave in January 2001. Some 5,000 displaced families, already weakened from a combination of drought and conflict, struggled in difficult and crowded conditions, exacerbated by a severe shortfall in emergency shelter. Many people died, particularly women, children and the elderly.

18. For the second year, Mongolia suffered from a harshly cold winter ("*Dzud*"), which followed on the heels of a severe drought. Over 115,000 herder families were affected by the loss of more than 2 million head of livestock, which doubled last year's toll, resulting in economic disaster for the country and nutritional problems for large segments of the population.

19. Barely one year after devastating floods in Mozambique affected one million people, floods struck the country and its surrounding region again in 2001, affecting a further 500,000 people. In Malawi, too, floods affected some 340,000 people and, in neighbouring Zambia, floods and drought combined to affect 1.5 million people in different parts of the country. Heavy rainfalls in Zimbabwe resulted in overflowing rivers and floods.

20. Adverse weather conditions also overcame many areas of Asia. Massive floods, triggered by the past year's south-west monsoon rains, swept through several countries in south and south-east Asia, including Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, India, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nepal, Thailand and Viet Nam. Thousands of people died and tens of millions were affected, notably in Cambodia, where more than 2.2 million people (20 per cent of the population) suffered from the worst monsoon floods to strike the country in 40 years. In the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, longer-term economic problems and continuing poor harvests have been further exacerbated by an ongoing series of natural disasters, namely, floods, drought and tropical storm damage. One third of the population of 22 million

people is now targeted for assistance with food, health care, water and sanitation.

21. Within a period of one month, two powerful earthquakes hit El Salvador in early 2001, affecting about 25 per cent of the total population. Some 1,159 people died and thousands more were injured. As the international community was engaged in addressing the consequences of the first earthquake in El Salvador, on 26 January 2001, a massive earthquake struck the western State of Gujarat in India, surprising the world with its scale. Over 20,000 people were killed and almost 16 million more were affected. The province, which held some promise in terms of economic development, is now weakened by an estimated $4.6 billion worth of damage.

B. Complex emergencies

22. Complex emergencies, resulting from conflict and often compounded by natural disasters, have intensified in many regions of the world. In the past year, an already serious humanitarian situation in the West African subregion of Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone worsened because of growing confrontations between government forces and dissident groups. Border attacks by armed groups in Guinea's Parrots Beak area, which had been the temporary home for some 200,000 Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees, resulted in massive displacement away from conflict areas. Following the large-scale atrocities and gross human rights violations committed against the resident and refugee populations during the attacks, thousands of people fled back to Sierra Leone, while others were forced to move deeper into Guinea to escape the fighting. The increasing role of armed non-State actors, the transnational nature of their criminal activities, the proliferation of small arms, the ineffective demobilization and reintegration of combatants, the continued recruitment of child soldiers and the use of the population as a "human shield" by the parties to the conflict is a serious threat to regional peace and stability.

23. Afghanistan also witnessed a dramatic deterioration in its humanitarian situation, in which 22 years of internal conflict, punctuated by the worst drought in 30 years, has accelerated the prolonged economic decline and general impoverishment of the people. Over the past year alone, 470,000 people have been added to an already large population that has fled their homes to escape drought and fighting. Among them are 30,000 people who fled the Yakawlang District of Bamian Province in Central Afghanistan, after the Taliban allegedly murdered some 300 civilians in January 2001, who it had accused of supporting the opposition. Human rights violations are rife and there is particularly brutal discrimination against women.

24. The Middle East is also witnessing a humanitarian emergency. Since late September 2000, strife in the occupied Palestinian Territory has led to deaths and injuries and a severe decline in the economy, devastating the living standards of the vast majority of the population.

25. The Democratic Republic of the Congo continued to suffer from the several differently motivated conflicts being waged in the country. Abuse of political power on a wide scale, including incitements to commit genocide, horrific abuses of human rights, the criminalization of economic activity, the presence of rebel movements and foreign armies, and the proliferation of general banditry, within a context of large-scale impunity, are but a few of the elements that define the existing political and socio-economic environment. An estimated 2.1 million people have been displaced and some 350,000 have sought refuge in neighbouring countries.

26. Conflicts also persisted in Angola, Somalia and the Sudan. In Angola, the conflict has escalated with serious ramifications for the neighbouring countries of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Namibia and Zambia. In May 2000, fighting again broke out between Eritrea and Ethiopia, which, combined with the drought, resulted in the displacement of over one million Eritreans, of whom some 50,000 fled to the Sudan. In addition, some 60,000 Ethiopians were allegedly deported from Eritrea, joining the 350,000 people already displaced within Ethiopia as a result of earlier fighting.

27. In Burundi, the international community negotiated with the Government to change its "regroupment" policy and dismantle many of the camps more recently established under it. Although the numbers of internally displaced persons living in such camps have been reduced by more than half since the beginning of 2001, the humanitarian agenda continues to be dominated by the plight of some 393,000 internally displaced persons in 217 camps. The lack of resolution on a ceasefire, despite the signing of the

peace agreement by 19 parties, means that the situation remains fragile and volatile. Human suffering is further compounded by the third consecutive year of drought and unprecedented levels of highland malaria.

28. In the Balkans, the United Nations is still dealing with the consequences of a decade of conflicts and general disorder that accompanied the unravelling of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. While conditions in Kosovo generally improved, except for in the minority enclaves, the outbreak of conflict in southern Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia caused new population displacements. These recent events underlined the potential of unresolved political and ethnic tensions to trigger new outbreaks of violence. The humanitarian needs of refugees, internally displaced persons and other war-affected persons remain part of a wider spectrum of regional and country-specific political, socio-economic and institutional instability. Similarly, in the Republic of Chechnya, Russian Federation, the United Nations remains engaged in dealing with the consequences of the crisis in the region, complementing the emergency relief being provided by the Government of the Russian Federation. There are approximately 160,000 internally displaced persons in Ingushetia and an estimated similar number in the Republic of Chechnya itself. Elsewhere, Indonesia also continues to encounter long-standing tensions in Aceh, West Papua, Malukus and West Timor.

29. Although the trend in complex emergencies continues to be bleak, there are some cases where humanitarian needs have declined. In the Republic of the Congo, the last of the country's 800,000 displaced persons have been able to return over the past year and begin rebuilding their lives. The signing of the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities by Eritrea and Ethiopia on 18 June 2000 (followed by the 12 December peace treaty), allowed the majority of the refugees in the Sudan to repatriate voluntarily, along with over 60,000 old caseload refugees. Some 600,000 persons displaced in Eritrea have also returned to their places of origin, although over 200,000 people remain in camps and some 100,000 continue to reside in host communities. The displaced persons within Ethiopia have also begun returning to their homes, with return rates of more than 70 per cent in selected areas in Tigray being reported by the end of 2000.

C. Coordination and response in humanitarian crises

30. Many of the coordination and response mechanisms rooted in General Assembly resolution 46/182 were originally developed in the context of natural disasters and have been increasingly used and adapted in cases of complex emergencies. This is particularly the case as more and more complex emergencies involve elements of both conflict and natural disaster. Reflecting this trend, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in its own recently changed management structure, has merged its respective branches for natural disaster and complex emergency response.

31. The drought in the Horn of Africa and central and southern Asia, the threat of famine in southern and western Sudan, the floods in Mozambique and Asia, the earthquakes in Latin America and India are obviously not one-time events. These regions have been affected by the same type of disaster several times in the past two decades. In its 1998 and 1999 agreed conclusions, the Economic and Social Council recognized the need for stronger preventive strategies, including strengthening of early warning systems at the country and regional levels to reduce the impact of disasters. It also called for better coordination among United Nations bodies to improve preparedness for and response to such disasters and reiterated the need to enhance local capacities to do the same.

32. To chart the course to better prevention and response, members of the United Nations system, in consultation with affected Governments, have conducted lessons-learned exercises. Such exercises were conducted following the floods in Mozambique and Cambodia, the *Dzud* in Mongolia and the earthquakes in El Salvador and India. Lessons learned have been incorporated into workshops and seminars with a broader national or regional scope, such as the June 2000 Curitiba seminar on disaster response preparedness in Latin America and those conducted by the United Nations Disaster Management Training Programme for United Nations country teams and national authorities. Nonetheless, the learning element in United Nations disaster response must be further strengthened.

33. A recurring theme of these evaluations is the need for strong contingency planning, strengthened national disaster management capacity and disaster response

coordination mechanisms, which include information management as well as regional cooperation. Inter-agency efforts in this regard have included a series of initiatives, such as the inter-agency contingency planning guidelines recently prepared by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to deal with environmental or natural disasters, civil unrest and conflict, or the related refugee outflows and internal displacement. As part of the contingency planning process, United Nations country teams, in consultation with the Governments concerned, jointly analyse the context of a situation, identify possible scenarios and define strategies and objectives for a coordinated, consolidated response. Such planning processes should also involve non-governmental organizations and local actors, thus strengthening links with relevant partners.

34. Following lessons learned from the crises in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, East Timor, Kosovo and Rwanda, the United Nations has begun to focus more attention on improved levels of contingency planning and preparedness for complex emergencies. An early response can lead to the mitigation of humanitarian needs and prevent the expansion of the humanitarian crisis. In a conflict situation, significant additional elements must be factored into the response. Security aspects are vitally important. Ongoing experience demonstrates that many humanitarian emergencies are prefaced by escalating human rights violations. Attention to and analysis of these patterns can have important preventative and responsive implications for the humanitarian community. Governmental infrastructure may be so shattered that immediate support is required to enable Governments to effectively lead and engage in the recovery process. This is apart from the longer-term process of generally strengthening State institutions.

35. Inter-agency response efforts for natural disasters have included the creation of regional United Nations disaster assessment and coordination teams which have increased the participation of disaster-prone developing countries in the United Nations disaster assessment and coordination system. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs now also has three regional disaster response advisers for Latin America, Asia and the Pacific, respectively. Two more are foreseen for the Caribbean and Central America and for southern Africa. Their role is to provide technical support to United Nations country teams and, through them, to the regional and national authorities, for the preparation of contingency plans and the coordination of natural disaster response. In addition, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) plans to establish five regional disaster reduction advisers who will be responsible for organizing and implementing effective programme support for national and regional disaster reduction and recovery activities, in terms of policy and strategy formulation, monitoring and evaluation, and financial monitoring and reporting. They will also provide inputs to partnership and alliance building, advocacy and training and will collaborate on all matters related to natural, environmental and technological disaster prevention, preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery.

36. Inter-agency response is also effected through joint missions. In recognition of the deteriorating situation in West Africa, in March 2001, the Secretary-General dispatched a high-level multidisciplinary inter-agency mission to the region as a first step in the United Nations/Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) efforts to develop a coherent integrated strategy. The mission emphasized the need for the international community to help solve critical structural problems, ensure linkages between emergency relief and development initiatives, and provide greater support to civil society initiatives. Based on proposals from Governments, donors and civil society and the mission's own findings, it recommended that a United Nations Office for West Africa be established to support and enhance the activities of ECOWAS and ensure harmonization of United Nations programmes with those of ECOWAS and other organizations in the subregion.

37. In the Horn of Africa, the focused response to the drought successfully averted a famine that threatened millions. The appointment by the Secretary-General of the Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP) as his Special Envoy on the Drought in the Greater Horn of Africa and the establishment of the Office for the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator in Addis Ababa helped to improve relief response capacity and coordination in the region. The positive response of the donor community to the food component of the appeal and the cessation of the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea also contributed to alleviating the impact of the disaster in the region.

38. While resourcing food shortfalls for the relief effort was crucial, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy highlighted the importance of interventions in

the non-food sector. Relatively low-cost inputs in the water, health and livestock sectors have a profound impact on the affected people and can allow them to continue the recovery process. Evidence collected by the respective regional ministries of health, the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and non-governmental organizations confirmed that insufficient coping of the local health systems, particularly related to reproductive health and children's health needs, greatly exacerbated the suffering. Member States should note the significant changes that investments in these sectors can bring to large numbers of people.

39. In recognition of the cyclical nature of the disaster in the Horn of Africa, the United Nations has developed regional contingency plans which are regularly updated, based on monitoring of the status of food security throughout the region and a synthesis of early warning information from Governments, the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and donors. The long-term consequences and requirements are addressed through coordinated planning for agricultural rehabilitation, to ensure that vulnerable populations, especially the households that rely on farming or livestock, will be able to restore their livelihoods.

40. The lessons learned from the February 2000 floods in Mozambique pointed to the weaknesses in contingency planning at the national and regional levels. With United Nations support, the National Institute for Disaster Management of the Government of Mozambique set about developing detailed contingency plans for a similar emergency. These were completed before the 2001 floods occurred, resulting in a faster response to the crisis and greater awareness of flood damage among the population and local offices of the Institute. This was aided by activities of the National Water Department, which issued daily reports on river and dam levels and was also able to provide projections regarding the extent of the flooding. Regionally, the neighbouring countries of Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe shared their hydrological information on river levels with Mozambique. Heads of States in the region met to discuss the emergency, which reinforced the need for a strengthened regional preparedness and response capacity. From this grew an initiative by the Southern African Development Community to develop proposals for a regional mechanism for disaster management, to be established within its secretariat. This process is now under way.

41. The accumulated widespread damage caused by the two earthquakes in El Salvador placed enormous strain on the response capacity of the Government and El Salvadorian society. The overall impact increased the population's vulnerability, which may be further affected by the upcoming rainy season and potential mudslides. A United Nations disaster management team is supporting the Government's activities for better response coordination and disaster preparedness. In South America in general, the engagement of national and local actors in disaster response is further aided by the Pan-American Health Organization.

42. In India, national and local governments mobilized as many people and resources as possible to cope with the trail of destruction left by the Gujarat earthquake. The Indian authorities led and coordinated the response, making use of the assistance offered by the international community, such as the expertise of the international urban search and rescue teams. Rescue and relief activities relied largely on a substantial number of local non-governmental organizations and on the active involvement of local communities. A United Nations disaster assessment and coordination team and a United Nations disaster management team also supported the Government in coordinating relief and on-site search and rescue activities, although the former's efforts were limited by insufficient staffing and inadequate resources. Throughout the emergency and in the months following, WHO provided particular support to the national and local health authorities.

D. Chronic vulnerability to humanitarian crises

1. Chronic vulnerability in natural disasters

43. The Economic and Social Council in its agreed conclusions of 1999 stressed the need to reduce the vulnerability of societies in developing countries to natural hazards. Natural disasters usually have devastating effects on both urban and rural populations. The material losses in output, means of production and income generation, and infrastructure are extremely significant, as they undermine the ability of survivors to subsist and recover. This is most prominent in agricultural communities, where the destruction of

crops and livestock results in reduced food security, and all too often in poor health, famine and death. The impact on women's workloads and health can be particularly severe, given their key roles in relation to food crop production and food security in many areas. The promotion of agricultural and rural development is paramount to reducing vulnerability and fostering overall national development and food security.

44. The droughts in Africa and Asia and the cold waves in Afghanistan and Mongolia had severe effects on farming and herding households. In Asia, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and WFP fielded crop and food supply assessment missions to several countries, including Afghanistan, Armenia, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Georgia, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and advised the international community on the recommended response. The need for agricultural assistance to protect the livelihoods of both farmers and rural herders was also assessed in Azerbaijan, Jordan, Moldova and Romania and special appeals issued.

45. Chronic vulnerability to food insecurity is the most fundamental development problem in the Horn of Africa, where as many as 70 million people, almost half the total population, are food insecure and seriously undernourished, even in normal rainfall years. Conflict, weak economies, poor governance and the dramatic decline of official development assistance to the region contributed to the seriousness of the emergency. In April 2000, the Secretary-General established an Inter-Agency Task Force on Long-Term Food Security, Agricultural Development and Related Aspects in the Horn of Africa, whose subsequent report presents a broad outline strategy to address the underlying causes of persistent problems in the region, including conflict, natural disasters, the growing imbalance between population and fragile natural resources, food insecurity, extreme poverty, lack of economic growth, ineffective institutions and services and inadequate infrastructure. As women have the key role in food production in the region, incorporation of their perspective will be critical. A regional consultation on its implementation, led by the Governments of the region, will be held in Nairobi in July.

46. In both El Salvador and India, the earthquakes had disastrous impacts on the economy. By contrast, the earthquake that struck Seattle, Washington (United States of America) in February 2000 and was of similar intensity had much less dramatic consequences. This testifies to how efforts in the developed world to mitigate risks significantly reduce damage and the resulting disruption to services and infrastructure. In this regard, the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, endorsed by the General Assembly in resolution 54/219 of 22 December 1999, promotes the reduction of vulnerability of communities to natural hazards in order to mitigate the loss of life and destruction that results when they strike.

47. In addition to the obvious shorter-term damage, there is increasing awareness that both natural disasters and complex emergencies have significant environmental consequences, which may have important long-term implications for those affected. To address this, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has strengthened its long-standing partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) through a joint initiative known as the Environmental Emergencies Service, which manages both man-made environmental emergencies and the severe environmental consequences of natural disasters.

2. Chronic vulnerability in complex emergencies

48. In complex humanitarian emergencies, affected populations often have little or no access to their traditional sources of income for long periods of time, owing to displacement and insecurity. As a result, the economic opportunities needed to sustain a dignified livelihood become more acute, particularly in protracted emergencies where populations are frequently on the move. If natural disaster has also struck, the ability of local communities to support displaced populations becomes severely limited, making large segments of these populations dependent on humanitarian assistance.

49. Prolonged conflict does not lead only to vulnerability in food and economic terms, but also in terms of health. The damage to health and sanitation infrastructure and serious reduction in services also have a profound affect on the community. Vaccination cycles break down, quickening the spread of disease. Worse still, the violence enacted on communities during conflict actually increases the demand for health services and medical treatment, meaning that capacities are overstretched at exactly the time when fewest resources are available.

50. More insidious is the effect of conflict on the spread of human immunodeficiency virus acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS). With rape and sexual violence as a widespread phenomenon of war, HIV prevalence is bound to go up, particularly when women and girls, in many situations, have little potential for protecting themselves from infection. Furthermore, the movement of combatants and the forced displacement of the civilian population contribute to the spread of the disease. By way of example, until 1997, Sierra Leone had a relatively low prevalence of HIV. However, the widespread sexual violence and massive population movements in Sierra Leone have increased prevalence rates significantly in both displaced and host populations. The consequences of HIV/AIDS on the social and economic spheres, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, have been devastating, as much of the progress made in those areas in recent decades has been severely undermined, or shattered. The movement of people across borders as a result of massive displacements not only contributes to the spread of the disease but easily renders preventive measures ineffective, particularly as over 80 per cent of those infected are unaware that they are carriers.

E. Key issues in the coordination of humanitarian assistance

1. Protection of civilians in armed conflict

51. As internal armed conflicts proliferate, civilians have become the principal victims. In his second report to the Security Council on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, dated 30 March 2001,[1] the Secretary-General states his belief that Member States, supported by the United Nations and other actors, must work towards creating a culture of protection. In such a culture of protection, Governments and armed groups would live up to their responsibilities and respect their obligations under international humanitarian law; the private sector would be conscious of the impact of its engagement in crisis areas; and Member States and international organizations would display the necessary commitment to ensuring decisive and rapid action in the face of crisis. The establishment of this culture will depend on the willingness of Member States to take decisive actions.

52. The primary responsibility for the protection of civilians rests with Governments. Protection efforts must be focused on the individual, rather than on the security interests of the State. Where Governments do not have resources and capacities to do this unaided, it is incumbent on them to invoke the support of the international system. Access to vulnerable populations is a key element to providing protection and is covered in a later section in the present report. Responding adequately where conflicts develop a regional dimension increasingly requires a regional focus rather than a solely country-specific approach of political decision makers. The Secretary-General emphasizes that the challenge of protecting civilian populations can only be met by reaching across traditional lines and creating synergy among all actors, including Governments, armed groups, the United Nations, regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, domestic civil society (including women, children and youth) and the private sector. In this regard, while working closely with Governments, humanitarian actors on the ground need to engage with armed groups and other non-State actors in a constructive dialogue aimed at facilitating humanitarian assistance.

2. Internal displacement

53. While not a new phenomenon, displacement has become larger, more complex and geographically more widespread over the past decade. Responsibility for the assistance and protection of internally displaced persons rests primarily with the host authority. The Economic and Social Council, in its agreed conclusions of 1999, called upon all States to apply internationally recognized norms with regard to internally displaced persons, and further called for the strengthening of international coordination efforts on their behalf.

54. In July 2000, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee agreed to establish a Senior Inter-Agency Network on Internal Displacement. The Network, comprising senior focal points in all concerned organizations, was mandated to carry out reviews of selected countries with internally displaced populations, and to make proposals for an improved international response to their basic needs. Representatives of the Network visited Afghanistan, Angola, Burundi, Eritrea and Ethiopia from October 2000 to May 2001, and confirmed that there are serious gaps in the United Nations humanitarian response to the needs of internally displaced persons, which require urgent attention. In response, the capacity of the Office

for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs will be strengthened to support the response of the operational agencies to the needs of internally displaced persons through the establishment of a small, inter-agency, non-operational Internally Displaced Persons Unit to advise the Emergency Relief Coordinator on and ensure an improved coordinated response to the needs of internally displaced persons. The Unit will be staffed by a small number of persons seconded from the members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. Extrabudgetary resources will be sought.

55. The Unit will support and complement the advocacy efforts of the Secretary-General's Representative on Internally Displaced Persons. In the past year, the Representative further raised the profile of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the global crisis of displacement through country missions, dialogue with Governments and other actors, his advocacy role and through research undertaken by his office, examining specific issues that emerge during crises of displacement. For example, in the past six months, the guiding principles have been reflected in a Constitutional Court decision in Colombia, new legislation on the return and resettlement of internally displaced persons in Angola and in legislation soon to be introduced in Georgia on voting rights for the internally displaced.

3. Gender

56. Since 1997, it has been the policy of the Economic and Social Council to mainstream attention to gender perspective in all areas of the work of the United Nations. Following this, it has been the policy of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee explicitly to integrate a gender perspective into humanitarian assistance and, in May 1999, it endorsed the policy statement on gender. Integrating the gender perspective requires an adequate gender analysis of each situation, before humanitarian responses are planned, and an awareness that, both during and after the crisis, gender roles and responsibilities may have changed. Although it is recognized that women and girls have particular needs and problems in conflict and post-conflict situations, it is important that women be seen not only as a vulnerable group, but also as key actors and agents of positive change.

57. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee has also focused on the provision of support to United Nations country teams to bring the situation of women and girls to the attention of the international community. The 2001 consolidated appeals process was launched globally under the theme "Women and war". The Inter-Agency Standing Committee is currently reviewing the guidelines and training tools for the consolidated appeals process to ensure that they carry appropriate "mainstreamed" messages concerning gender. The review directly incorporates Member States' suggestions on gender mainstreaming. The Committee's electronic resource package, which was launched on International Women's Day 2001 and posted on ReliefWeb, will assist humanitarian coordinators and field staff in mainstreaming gender into the 2002 consolidated appeals process.

58. The effects of armed conflict fall disproportionately on women. The number of women-headed households increases significantly during conflict, as many women are widowed or lose contact with their husbands. Women are often forced into involuntary long-term sexual relations or forced labour. Prostitution, sexual violence and rape are common features of conflict situations and psychosocial support needs are vast. Particular attention must be paid to women ex-combatants and girl child soldiers, in terms of their demobilization and reintegration. The special needs of women and girls in refugee camps and settlements for internally displaced persons also need to be taken into account, particularly with regard to how the carrying out of normal responsibilities may expose women to greater risk of sexual violence. The policy of the Taliban and the often violent discrimination against women presents particular problems in assisting women in Afghanistan.

59. In resolution 1325 (2000) of 31 October 2000, the Security Council called upon all parties to armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse. The Administrative Committee on Coordination Inter-agency Meeting on Women and Gender Equality established a Task Force on Women, Peace and Security with the specific aim of following up on the implementation of Council resolution 1325 (2000). Its findings and recommendations on gender mainstreaming in humanitarian activities will be included in the report of the Secretary-General that was requested by the Council in the same resolution.

60. Reproductive health, nutrition, education and empowerment are important areas of focus for

improving the situation for women and girls. An Inter-Agency Group on Reproductive Health in Refugee Situations, comprising the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and Member States, has recommended a series of measures to ensure appropriate reproductive health services for refugees and displaced persons. The United Nations Population Fund has been increasingly active in this area, providing reproductive health supplies and services in the wake of natural disasters, such as those in El Salvador, India and Mongolia, and for displaced people in complex emergencies, such as those in East Timor and Eritrea.

61. Often overlooked is the important role played by women in the areas of conflict resolution, management and reconciliation. In the West African subregion, a number of women's groups are well organized and have established links with groups in other countries with whom they are developing common action plans, in addition to mobilizing civil society to bring pressure to bear on political and military leaders to resolve conflicts peacefully. However, the capacity of women's groups is often limited by lack of access to decision makers and resources. Member States are encouraged to consider ways that the work of such groups can be enhanced, so that they can play the fullest possible role in initiatives aimed at promoting peace, security, respect for human rights and development.

4. Children

62. Child protection includes the right of every child to have access to uninterrupted basic care. This stands as a core commitment of the international community and should be an absolute priority for national and local governments, especially in prolonged complex emergencies. Inclusion of the child perspective, in both the assessment and analysis of a given situation, is extremely important for highlighting the necessary action when the social fabric and the elementary family and community economy have been severely weakened or destroyed. Behind the unacceptably high ratios of child and adolescent mortality remains the fact, that those who survive often do so against a background of failing basic health and education, diminishing household food security and limited or no reliable water and sanitation systems. Many children are displaced or threatened with displacement and further violence, particularly sexual violence in the case of the girl child.

63. The last decade has witnessed a growing commitment at the political level towards the protection of children in situations of armed conflict. The Graça Machel report on the impact of conflict on children (A/51/306), the appointment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the adoption of the children and armed conflict agenda by the Security Council and a number of regional organizations have all been important steps forward. The adoption of new international standards during the 1990s, particularly the Ottawa Convention and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the participation of children in conflict have likewise provided the humanitarian community with new and important tools for the protection of children.

64. In its 1999 agreed conclusions, the Economic and Social Council called for systematic, concerted and comprehensive inter-agency efforts on behalf of children, as well as adequate and sustainable resource allocation to provide them with emergency assistance and long-term measures. Initial steps have been taken to reflect the growing political commitment towards child protection which are expected to lead to greater respect for the new international standards, by all parties to a conflict, at a scale that can trigger measurable impact. The breakthrough Security Council resolutions that included the protection of children in the mandates of the United Nations peacekeeping operations for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone (resolutions 1261 (1999) and 1265 (1999)) and allowed for the appointment of child protection advisers as an integral part of those missions, have been followed by two important developments: child protection issues now feature prominently in the training and orientation of the peacekeepers themselves, and child protection advisers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo were able to consistently raise the issue of child recruitment with several armed opposition groups. Nonetheless, sustained access to all children affected by armed conflict has remained elusive, mainly against a background of low funding of child-specific priority projects, including for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. By way of follow-up to the 1991 World Summit on Children, the General Assembly has decided to convene a special session on children in September 2001.

IV. Progress and constraints in strengthening the coordination of humanitarian assistance

A. Tools and mechanisms of humanitarian response

65. During the ten years since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 46/182, the United Nations system has had to anticipate and respond creatively to rapidly changing dynamics in a variety of emergency situations, and has faced a range of challenges. The tools and mechanisms established under resolution 46/182 have been the backbone for ensuring coordinated and coherent response in these emergencies.

1. Emergency Relief Coordinator

66. The role of the Emergency Relief Coordinator as required under resolution 46/182 is to ensure better preparation for, as well as rapid and coherent response to, natural disasters and other emergencies. Notably, the office was created on the understanding that the requisite resources for it and the related coordination mechanisms described below would be provided. In the past ten years, the United Nations system has accepted and recognized that, with the support of these mechanisms and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Emergency Relief Coordinator provides key leadership for better coordination. At the same time, the United Nations humanitarian entities have realized the importance of having ownership of coordination and that the effectiveness of the coordination mechanisms depends most on people contributing as a team. The role of the Emergency Relief Coordinator is not just to coordinate immediate response to crises, but to be strategic in doing so, and particularly to contribute to the smooth transition from life-saving assistance to sustainable development.

67. The humanitarian system is now better informed by the political environment in which assistance is given and the role and activities of peace operations. A key task for the Emergency Relief Coordinator remains that of advocating that the humanitarian agenda and the principles and nature of humanitarian action be recognized and respected, particularly in peacekeeping operations. Other challenges include strengthening his leadership as the inter-agency focal point on internally displaced persons and engaging more actively in negotiations for access to vulnerable populations in general. In addition, the Coordinator must manage the increasing field presence of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to ensure that it adheres to the core mandate of the Office.

2. Inter-Agency Standing Committee

68. There is no question that, ten years ago, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee was a unique concept, bringing together the United Nations humanitarian bodies with non-United Nations organizations, some of which are standing invitees to the Committee, such as the International Organization for Migration, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, to engage in fruitful dialogue on humanitarian issues. The intervening years have demonstrated the foresightedness of the initiative, particularly in the light of the increasingly more important role played by non-governmental organizations in providing humanitarian assistance. It is paramount for effective coordination that the United Nations work yet more closely with these organizations. In this regard, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee must be strengthened to maintain its central role as a key coordination and consultative mechanism among its core members and standing invitees.

69. Given the very nature and breadth of its membership, it is not always possible for all the executive heads of each member of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to meet formally on a regular basis. However, the creation of the Committee has encouraged much more informal consultation and meetings amongst the executive heads and this spirit is now firmly entrenched. This is supported by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee working group and a variety of subsidiary reference groups and task forces established by the Committee which have fostered cooperation between the participating bodies at different levels. Through these bodies, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee has become increasingly useful for operational purposes by continuing to develop and refine its coordinated approaches to humanitarian crisis, in accordance with the agreed conclusions of the Economic and Social Council. It has articulated key policy and operational issues, such as how best to address the transition from relief to

development, post-conflict reintegration, staff security, the relationship between human rights and humanitarian action, mainstreaming the gender perspective, the humanitarian impact of sanctions and the consolidated appeals process. Coordinated work has ranged from joint logistics arrangements and joint assessments of needs to formulating policy on what tools are required to improve a coordinated response.

70. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee is also a forum for consultation on the establishment of field coordination structures. In particular, it is involved in the selection of resident/humanitarian coordinators who have an important role to play in ensuring systematic dissemination and implementation of key Inter-Agency Standing Committee initiatives and statements, as well as providing feedback to the appropriate part of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on important issues, which require debate and a policy response. An improved process of consultation and feedback between the humanitarian coordinators and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee will make it yet more useful and responsive to concerns raised by persons in the field.

3. Central Emergency Revolving Fund

71. The Central Emergency Revolving Fund was principally set up to allow for rapid response to humanitarian emergencies and is managed by the Emergency Relief Coordinator, in consultation with the operational agencies concerned. Since its inception in 1992, over $200 million has been disbursed on a revolving basis to meet the immediate humanitarian needs in the initial phase of an emergency, of which some $33 million was given in the last year (since 1 June 2000). Over the last decade, there has been an increase in the range and variety of funding mechanisms for humanitarian emergencies. In recent years, United Nations operational organizations have first resorted to their own trust funds and specific emergency funds and internal reserves and have called upon the Central Emergency Revolving Fund only when their needs surpassed their own financial resources. As a result, the use of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund has been uneven in recent years with fewer advances being requested.

72. Since its establishment under resolution 46/182, no significant adjustments have been made to the operations of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund, despite important changes in the humanitarian environment, such as the increasing number of natural disasters, the prevalence of protracted humanitarian emergencies for which funds have been difficult to secure, and the more frequent incidents of murder and kidnapping of humanitarian staff. To transform the Central Emergency Revolving Fund into an instrument that is more responsive to the changes that have occurred in the humanitarian field since 1991, the Secretary-General has prepared a separate note on enhancing the functioning and utilization of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (A/55/649), which will be considered by the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session. The note contains recommendations aimed at ensuring a more efficient utilization of the Fund by expanding its use to support humanitarian assistance for natural disasters and protracted emergencies and for security arrangements for United Nations and associated personnel. The Secretary-General also proposes that the level of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund be reduced from $50 million to $40 million, with the remaining $10 million being transferred to a trust fund to be established for life-saving assistance, particularly in Africa. Member States are encouraged to give due consideration to the Secretary-General's recommendations in this regard.

4. The consolidated appeals process

73. Since its inception in 1991, there have been continuous efforts to improve the consolidated appeals process as a process and a coordination tool. The consolidated appeals process has considerably evolved and is widely recognized and accepted as a key tool to coordinate humanitarian strategies and appeal for funds. It is now more systematic and structured and benefits from the enhanced role of non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations. A few key, recognized challenges remain, such as better prioritizing the needs outlined in consolidated appeal documents. The introduction of the "consolidated appeals process-revision" facility has made it possible to revise either the strategy or project parts of the document, independently of each other. Several parts of the appeals have been updated to adjust to changing situations and resulting needs, without the need to reissue the appeals. Online revisions and contributions reporting transformed the consolidated appeal into a living instrument. In particular, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has improved the financial tracking system on ReliefWeb, in response to donor requests for substantive financial analysis to

understand the reasons for and the impact of underfunding.

74. Donors have reiterated strong support for the consolidated appeals process as one of the most successful tools for humanitarian coordination and have clearly expressed their commitment to the process through the common observations resulting from donors' retreat on the consolidated appeals process and Coordination in Humanitarian Emergencies, held in Montreux, Switzerland, in March 2001. However, statements of support for the process itself need to be accompanied by further coordination among donors to ensure that there is broad support for the strategy expressed in the consolidated appeals process. For this purpose, a first informal discussion between agencies and donors was held in Geneva in January 2001. Despite growing donor interest in seeing better coordinated and consolidated plans covering the gamut of needs and agency proposals in a given emergency situation, there continues to be a tendency to favour bilateral assistance. At times, this comes at the expense of multilateral funding, thereby making the coordination of international response more difficult.

75. Contributions to the consolidated appeals process fell from $1.96 billion in 1994 to $1.2 billion in 2000, and the share of requirements met has shown a steady downward trend, from 80 per cent in 1994 to 59 per cent in 2000. During the 2001 mid-year review, particular focus was placed on the impact of underfunding. As at 22 May, six months after the 2001 consolidated appeals were launched, only 23 per cent of the $2.8 billion requested has been funded. It was stressed that this may seriously undermine the capacity of the process as a coordination tool. Donors were urged to work more closely together to address these requirements in a more balanced way. This requires donors to fund the package of projects in the appeal and not just certain sectors. Some crises are almost ignored, and in others, emergency food aid receives the bulk of contributions, while non-food sectors, such as agriculture, health, education, and water and sanitation remain woefully underfunded. Consequently, the goals and objectives of the consolidated appeals process, particularly those relating to rehabilitation, are not met and urgent needs are not addressed. Agency buy-in to the process also suffers, although there has been considerable improvement in this regard and in the use of the Common Humanitarian Action Plan as a priority setting and common planning tool, which now forms part of the consolidated appeals process. More work, including training, is also needed to achieve the full commitment of resident/humanitarian coordinators to lead the process at the country level. With the expertise and participation of donor Governments, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs intends to carry out an analysis of donor funding patterns and the strategic coherence of the consolidated appeals process, to identify ways to address imbalances.

76. To avoid multiplication of tools and to ensure that an integrated strategy is undertaken in the recovery phase, including political, security, humanitarian and development dimensions, linkages between the consolidated appeals process and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework need to be developed and made more explicit. Indicators developed for the common country assessments may be used to inform vulnerability analysis within the consolidated appeals process. The United Nations country team in the Republic of the Congo devised an innovative approach, combining the essential elements of the consolidated appeals process, the common country assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework into a single "United Nations Plan". The Plan responds to challenges in the transition phase with a single planning document. It includes analysis and assessment, identifies priority areas and key issues, describes a programming framework and lists the activities from the various agencies that require funding. It also reviews humanitarian needs and presents possible scenarios of returning crisis for contingency planning, while outlining continuing short-term programmes, including a Common Humanitarian Action Plan.

77. Another creative development was the flexibility built into the United Nations inter-agency consolidated appeal for West Africa, which allows regional managers to redirect resources between countries and between activities, according to the principle that resources should follow the beneficiaries, wherever they are. Importantly, the appeal not only targeted refugees and internally displaced persons, but also took an innovative position with regard to assistance to host communities and contingency planning for future crises.

78. The importance of the consolidated appeals process in gender mainstreaming has been highlighted earlier. It is also recognized that human rights projects

have a legitimate place in the consolidated appeals process, to the extent that they highlight the intrinsic connections between human rights and effective humanitarian action. In addition, the topic of human rights is recognized as a fundamental "cross-cutting theme".

5. Strengthening the resident/humanitarian coordinator system

79. In 1994, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee approved the terms of reference for humanitarian coordinators who would "upon the occurrence of a complex emergency in a country" be appointed by the Emergency Relief Coordinator, on behalf of the Secretary-General and after consultation with Inter-Agency Standing Committee, to be the senior United Nations official on the ground in charge of coordinating international humanitarian assistance. It was agreed that the United Nations resident coordinator serving in the affected country would normally become the humanitarian coordinator, although two other possibilities were foreseen: the separate appointment of a humanitarian coordinator or the designation of a "lead agency", whose local country director would exercise the functions of humanitarian coordinator. In 1997, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee reviewed the various coordination mechanisms and reaffirmed that the current resident coordinator should become the humanitarian coordinator if he or she has the necessary profile. Otherwise, an immediate replacement should simultaneously fulfil the resident coordinator and humanitarian coordinator functions. Only in those cases where the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee determined that the same person could not carry out the dual resident/humanitarian coordinator functions would a separate humanitarian coordinator be appointed.

80. To better inform the ongoing debate on appropriate field coordination models, agencies are collaborating to draw lessons from recent experiences in United Nations humanitarian coordination to identify the key features of those arrangements which have provided added value in the field. There is also increased interest by humanitarian agencies to play a major role in the resident/humanitarian coordinator system. Humanitarian experience is being given increasing prominence in the inter-agency process charged with reviewing candidates and a humanitarian component is now included in the competency assessment process. The terms of reference for the heads offices of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and their working relationship with resident/humanitarian coordinators is also under review. However, against this background, there have been problems in designating resident/humanitarian coordinators for a few key locations. Members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee are working together on methodologies to streamline the selection process and define interim arrangements to avoid delays in the appointments of coordinators.

B. Supporting the coordination and response role of regional, national and local actors

81. Indigenous actors have the advantage of being better able to mobilize local resources for both preparedness and response activities. Efforts to strengthen regional humanitarian capacities must be undertaken with the ultimate goal of strengthening and enhancing local capacities. In doing so, there is a need to engage the entire community in responding to any disaster, in order to capture the range of knowledge and resources that the different members of the community can contribute.

82. To strengthen the role of regional bodies and national actors in humanitarian response, including non-governmental organizations, the international community should promote the decentralization of the management of humanitarian assistance. International actors should gradually endeavour to play a lesser role in the direct provision of humanitarian aid and focus on strengthening indigenous preparedness capabilities to facilitate increased responsibility for and ownership of humanitarian response at the regional and national level. International actors can support this approach through, inter alia, the provision of technical and financial support. The international community needs to be increasingly seen as complementing the efforts of local actors to prepare for and deal with humanitarian emergencies, whenever possible.

83. In conflict situations, international humanitarian actors are increasingly cognizant of the underlying political and human rights circumstances in which they operate. Building partnership and trust with Governments and local authorities is key to providing more effective assistance, based on better assessments

of vulnerable populations, and helps to reduce security risks, as local communities become stakeholders and advisers in humanitarian operations. Such dialogue ensures that relief aid is given in a way that does not generate dependency and jeopardize the capacity of the receivers to regain their full self-reliance as soon as conditions permit. Local authorities and communities can advise on the possible long-term impact of the immediate response to humanitarian needs and guide the way forward during the post-emergency phase. A vital element of this process is the participation of women. In normal circumstances, women generally have particular resources and expertise based on their usual activities and roles in the community. However, in times of conflict, these roles can become distorted and frequently, women must also assume more of the traditional roles of men when they are absent, wounded or killed. Equally important for societies emerging from conflict is the fact that planning for recovery benefits from rights-based programming carried out with representatives of the different members of the local community concerned.

84. In recognition of the need to support regional and national capacities and in addition to the United Nations disaster assessment and coordination and UNDP advisers referred to in paragraph 35 above, the United Nations disaster assessment and coordination regional groups, which include experts from the region concerned, now exist in Europe, Latin America and the South Pacific and in 2001 will include the Caribbean region, bringing ten new countries into the system. It is recommended that a similar regional group be established in Asia, the world's most disaster-prone continent. Among the fundamental recommendations of the recent review of the United Nations disaster assessment and coordination system was the need further to enhance awareness and ownership of the system in disaster-prone countries. Developing partnerships in these regions and preparing the ground for missions was seen as paramount to the ability of the system to provide effective support.

85. Following the series of earthquakes in recent years, the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group has reactivated its groups in the Asian and Latin American regions, bringing together countries that are prone to earthquakes with those countries that have a capacity to respond to urban search and rescue operations within the respective regions. These groups build on lessons learned in previous disasters in designing preparedness and response concepts for their region, based on the standardization criteria defined by International Search and Rescue Advisory Group for training, equipment and coordination procedures in the field. Earthquake-prone countries are encouraged to participate in these regional activities to enhance their national preparedness to respond to earthquakes and to integrate their national search and rescue structures into regional and international ones. At the request of interested Governments, consultations recently began on the question of a legal framework for international urban search and rescue. Some 22 countries (earthquake-prone and response providers from all continents) have formed a Core Group which met in February 2001. The consultations will be expanded to include a broader range of countries in a second phase later in the year.

C. Strengthening coordination and linkages in crisis situations

86. The Economic and Social Council, in its agreed conclusions, reaffirmed the guiding principles of humanitarian assistance contained in General Assembly resolution 46/182 and called upon the Secretary-General and the Emergency Relief Coordinator to ensure a high degree of coherence between the assistance and the political and human rights aspects of the United Nations response to crises. Humanitarian action is one of several aspects of the possible response by the United Nations to a conflict and must always be accompanied by efforts to bring about a just and sustainable peace. The United Nations role in the fields of peace and security and humanitarian affairs is distinct; nevertheless, it is vital that the United Nations system attempt to ensure a complementary approach where possible. The United Nations has taken several steps to improve coherence while maintaining the necessary independence of humanitarian action. One example is the Secretary-General's note of guidance on the relationship between resident/humanitarian coordinators and his special representatives, which was issued in December 2000 and which attempts, for the first time, to define more clearly the relations between the different roles of the United Nations in countries in crisis.

87. Coordination structures at headquarters and, most importantly, at the field level must be transparent, particularly when there is a multiplicity of actors

dealing with humanitarian and human rights issues, in an environment that includes political and peace programmes. In Afghanistan, the United Nations system operates according to a strategic framework which uniquely brings together the political, assistance and human rights dimensions of the organization in a concerted strategy aimed at supporting peace. It is supported by the principled common programming approach in which all aid actors (the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and donors) participate.

88. The Emergency Relief Coordinator, on a routine basis, through the resident/humanitarian coordinators in countries affected by complex emergencies, seeks to strengthen coherence between all parts of the United Nations system whilst maintaining the appropriate independence of humanitarian action. In addition, as part of the follow-up to the report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (A/55/305-S/2000/809), the Emergency Relief Coordinator has assisted in the development of related system-wide policies. This includes improving the coordination between relief and development efforts and the reform of headquarters structures which support peace and humanitarian operations in the field. There must be a clear understanding on the respective roles and division of labour and responsibilities among political, peacekeeping and humanitarian actors, which must then be clearly and consistently explained to and reinforced with the warring parties and population in general. The challenge then is how to develop broad guidelines that enable the various bodies to maintain their independence, but at the same time provide complementary support.

89. In view of the variety of actors involved in responding to crises, the United Nations humanitarian bodies need to ensure closer collaboration with other humanitarian actors, notably non-governmental organizations. This is particularly important, given the growing role of non-governmental organizations in the delivery of humanitarian assistance and the increasing amount of funding that is channelled directly to them. Much greater attention needs to be paid to both formulating strategies and coordinating activities with non-governmental organizations and encouraging adherence to a common humanitarian strategy. In situations of protracted crisis, as well as in post-crisis and recovery situations, coordination and partnerships between development and aid actors, including the Bretton Woods institutions, becomes increasingly important.

90. The private sector has provided support in the area of disaster preparedness, response and rehabilitation. Support has been provided in areas such as communications, transportation and infrastructure. For example, a major communications company collaborated with the United Nations and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in providing material and logistical support and training of personnel and through participation in assessments in El Salvador, India and Tajikistan. However, not all business seeks to be helpful or socially responsible. Some national and multinational entities gain an economic advantage from the collapse of governance structures in conflict-shattered countries. This can impact on the humanitarian situation and have direct consequences on humanitarian operations. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee is examining and analysing ways and means by which some of these negative consequences may be mitigated and plans to engage with representatives of industry, non-governmental organizations and civil society to discuss the issue further.

91. Recent response to natural disasters has seen an expanded use of military assets. For example, in the response to the floods in Mozambique in 2000, and to a lesser extent in 2001, a large portion of the aircraft, helicopters and boats deployed was provided from the military assets of various countries and managed by inter-agency joint logistics cells. The database on the use of military and civil defence assets is constantly updated for more efficient mobilization and coordination of the use of military and civil defence assets in humanitarian operations. The possible inclusion of the use of Advanced Technologies in Disaster Response in the Central Registry is under study. The 1994 "Oslo guidelines" cover the use of military and civil defence assets in natural and technological disaster response. However, more donor States have decided to respond with military assets to international requests for humanitarian support in complex emergencies, such as in East Timor and Kosovo. The United Nations is currently re-examining when and how such assets should be used and provided in these circumstances.

D. Information management

1. Preparedness, management and coordination

92. The collection, analysis, synthesis and dissemination of information are recognized as key elements of all coordination activities. The sharing and integration of cross-sectoral, institutional and geographical data increases the quality of decision-making and reduces response time. Information, such as statistics on population movements, existing health infrastructure, agricultural households, etc., supports contingency planning, preparedness and response capacities, and helps to set the stage for future development planning. The 1999 agreed conclusions of the Economic and Social Council pointed to the need for improved preparedness and response capacities. In this regard, there is an overall effort to improve the quality, timeliness and scope of information shared in relation to emergencies between the concerned government, humanitarian actors and other Member States at the national, regional and international levels.

93. Key challenges are to minimize duplication in data-gathering and maximize its accessibility to potential users. In the last few years, a number of field-based coordinated information centres have been established. Significantly, these have developed on the ground in response to an identified need for information coordination and management. An important part of this process for future centres will be further to draw on and strengthen the capacity of national and local authorities to gather and share information on the needs of their populations.

94. In 1998, the Geographic Information Support Team[2] was established to reinforce the use of geographic information as a catalyst for information management. It facilitated the creation of information centres, jointly established by the United Nations, other humanitarian partners and Governments, to support field operations, such as those in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Kosovo and Sierra Leone. Each of the various ad hoc field-based centres has developed important new tools and identified methods for streamlining the management and coordination of information, that will be replicated and used in establishing new centres. These include agreed frameworks for gathering, reporting and exchanging information; information systems on assistance, refugees, internally displaced persons; common digital maps; libraries of assessments; donor resource tracking tools; and project planning tools. In many of the information centres, the involvement of members of the development community has been strengthened to facilitate efforts to coordinate the transition from relief to reconstruction and development.

2. Global online information management

95. The above paragraph contains examples of information centres established for the specific purpose of responding to a particular crisis, which although available to a larger audience, especially target the players in the field. A global permanent mechanism is also important for ensuring widespread access to relevant, reliable, comprehensive and up-to-date information. To this end, the ReliefWeb site was developed to facilitate information exchange, primarily among the humanitarian community, and is now a key source for the online dissemination of information on natural disasters and other emergencies. Governments, the United Nations, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and other relevant bodies are encouraged to actively share information via ReliefWeb, which today offers access to over 600 information sources (including media). Its recently redesigned Map Centre is one of the largest online collections of maps, containing maps with both baseline and thematic humanitarian-related information. In 2001, ReliefWeb established an office in Kobe, Japan, to increase the coverage of natural disasters and other emergencies in the Asia Pacific region. A Virtual On-Site Operations Coordination Centre was also established early in 2001 to support information management amongst search and rescue response partners. Although still under development, it proved its usefulness as a quick access, information-sharing platform in the earthquake disasters in El Salvador and India.

3. Contextual information

96. As important as the need to share accurate information on crisis situations is the need to understand the changing political and social context in which assistance plans are to be implemented. Failure to do so can lead to the provision of assistance being poorly perceived or wrongly targeted. The United Nations Integrated Regional Information Network, established in Nairobi during the Great Lakes crisis, and later replicated in Abidjan and Johannesburg, seeks to ensure that accurate, impartial and timely

information on regional events and trends reaches decision makers in Governments, aid agencies and United Nations partners. Two key developments for 2000 were the establishment of desks for the Horn of Africa and Central Asia. The former covers Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, the Sudan and Somalia. For Somalia, it also pioneered the "WebSpecial", a news magazine on the peace agreement, and developed a radio project for people in rural areas. For the latter, feasibility studies conducted early in 2000 confirmed that news coverage of Central Asia was poor and often partisan. The Islamabad office of the Information Network helps to fill the void, by reporting on humanitarian events in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan and, more recently, on the Islamic Republic of Iran and other central Asian republics.

V. Challenges to providing humanitarian assistance

A. Access

97. In numerous countries around the world, humanitarian actors are present but unable to reach large portions of affected populations needing their assistance. Access is one of the key challenges facing humanitarian operations, particularly in complex emergencies. Frequently access is limited by the prevailing security situation but sometimes the obstacle is also a question of policy on the part of the authorities controlling a given region or country. For example, from time to time, the Government of Israel has imposed external and internal closures on the occupied Palestinian territory, obstructing free movement of humanitarian goods and personnel. In the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, access to the population has become considerably easier since 1995, although some tight controls on the work of humanitarian agencies still remain, particularly with regard to freedom of movement, monitoring and evaluation.

98. At the inception of the crisis in Guinea, total lack of access to the conflict areas, owing to insecurity and the Government's stringent military measures, prevented any intervention by relief organizations. However, following negotiations with key international leaders, particularly those carried out by United Nations agencies such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Government agreed to the international relief and humanitarian agencies regaining access to almost all the concerned areas and committed to supporting the relocation further inland of the refugees stranded in those areas. Based on the principles of "safe access to refugees" and "safe passage for refugees" set forth by the High Commissioner for Refugees and accepted by the Government, some 57,000 refugees were relocated from the Parrot's Beak area during May 2001.

99. In Burundi and Somalia, the ability to provide humanitarian assistance is dictated by the level of insecurity surrounding both the population and aid workers themselves. Attacks on aid workers in the past year demanded yet another reassessment of the security situation at a time when the humanitarian community was seeking to expand its programmes in those countries. Nonetheless, the United Nations has continued to advocate for increased access to all populations requiring assistance and to promote peace-building efforts. On 7 February 2001, the Minister of Human Rights of Burundi and the Humanitarian Coordinator signed a protocol on opening dialogue between the authorities and the humanitarian community and finding joint mechanisms to improve access to vulnerable people and provide them with assistance. In Somalia, the United Nations country team is consolidating past policies and guidelines on international assistance to that country and the division of roles and responsibilities into a document on "structured relations", to be agreed upon within the Somalia Aid Coordination Body. It will incorporate elements of the Body's 1995 Code of Conduct, which include respect for local customs, impartiality and assistance, in return for guarantees of security and justice for perpetrators of criminal acts. This centrally agreed set of ground rules then forms the basis for more detailed negotiations between agencies and the authorities. In the Sudan, the unique Technical Committee on Humanitarian Assistance brings together the parties to the conflict, the United Nations and donors to discuss access, security, humanitarian principles and communications. It has produced several joint protocol agreements signed by the Government and warring parties to improve accountability.

100. In Angola, as in a number of other cases, access to the population is further complicated by the widespread presence of landmines. Surface access has been so severely restricted by landmines and insecurity that 70 per cent of humanitarian aid must be

transported by air. However, the Government has assisted the internally displaced population by opening six major road corridors to allow humanitarian agencies to reach needy areas. With improved accessibility, the number of newly displaced persons has fallen by almost two thirds since 1999. This begs the question to what extent lack of access actually increases the size of the humanitarian problem. Given the inability of aid agencies to access the needy in adverse circumstances, affected populations sometimes have no choice but to become displaced in their own efforts to reach assistance, thereby increasing their vulnerability and exposing them to possibly greater security risks. Although insecurity will always lead to new displacement, improved efforts to negotiate access might at least afford some people the opportunity to remain in their own homes where coping mechanisms are more readily available.

101. However, negotiating access raises problems of its own, as meaningful discussions can only be held with the parties or elements that are actually in physical control of the area. Negotiating access is an extremely intricate and time-consuming process, with no certain guarantees, that has a vast impact on the conduct of humanitarian operations. The humanitarian community regularly finds itself in difficulties over its engagement and negotiations with armed groups in pursuit of its humanitarian goals. This is largely the result of a lack of respect for international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles by these groups.

102. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the withdrawal of the parties from the front lines and the deployment of peacekeepers may result in improved access for humanitarian agencies and create the necessary security conditions for the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Even prior to this, attempts to create partnerships with local community leaders to increase the effectiveness of humanitarian operations and address security concerns had met with some success. Notably, following a series of attacks in the north-eastern city of Bunia, the humanitarian community mobilized and engaged in discussions with leaders from the different communities, and successfully defined and enlarged the space for humanitarian action, both for the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations. This was done through establishing humanitarian liaison committees at each of the sites where threats had been made against humanitarian operators, to allow for clarification of misunderstandings, and to clear the way for humanitarian operations. Tragically, the beginning of improved dialogue has been vastly overshadowed by the recent murder of six ICRC staff in that area. Negotiations are continuing with the committees to avoid further tragedies. Elsewhere in the country, the United Nations is negotiating with the Government and rebel authorities to reopen the rivers, now used only by military traffic, to trade and commerce under the "Boat for Peace" initiative. Prior to all this, UNICEF and WHO negotiated days of access or cessation in hostilities for the purpose of immunizing children. The idea of humanitarian pauses was also used in Indonesia, which not only allowed assistance to reach needy populations but led to a reduction in the fighting, thereby paving the way for dialogue.

103. Member States have a vital role to play in supporting the efforts of those negotiating access, providing additional leverage or undertaking complementary diplomatic and political action. It is clear that if access is successfully negotiated or is allowed by improvements in the security situation, the opportunity must be seized. But this also has important funding implications as gaining access may substantially increase the size of the beneficiary populations. In Angola, there are reportedly some 525,000 displaced persons in areas to which the humanitarian community does not currently have access. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, if improvements continue, the humanitarian community must rise to the challenge of providing support to more than two million internally displaced persons, less than half of whom were previously receiving humanitarian assistance, owing to lack of access. For many programmes, current beneficiary figures and related requests for funding are based on the people that can be reached now. Access to new beneficiaries that has been gained after a long struggle must be accompanied by immediate assistance, which will be totally dependent on speedy and flexible funding arrangements.

B. Safety and security of staff

104. The report of the Secretary-General on safety and security of United Nations personnel (A/55/494) highlighted the range of threats against United Nations personnel, the inadequacy of the existing security management structure and proposals to enhance the

safety and security of those personnel. Meanwhile, attacks on humanitarian workers have continued. The latest incidents since the issuance of that report include the March 2001 murder of a UNHCR worker in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the kidnapping of eight aid workers by an armed faction in Somalia and the armed attack on a WFP food convoy in Burundi that left five relief workers injured, all occurring within a month. This was followed by the kidnapping of four aid workers in the Sudan and, in April 2001, six ICRC workers were brutally murdered in a targeted ambush in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. More recently, an ICRC co-pilot was killed when his aircraft was shot at while flying over south Sudan. Security of humanitarian workers must clearly remain a high priority of the Secretary-General, Member States and humanitarian organizations.

105. In the 1999 agreed conclusions of the Economic and Social Council, Member States recognized the importance of strengthening staff security by calling upon all parties to ensure the safety of international and national humanitarian personnel. The United Nations has undertaken numerous efforts to strengthen staff security management. During its fifty-sixth session, the General Assembly will be presented with a report containing a proposal to expand the scope of the Convention on the Safety and Security of United Nations and Associated Personnel (A/55/637) and a report in response to General Assembly resolution 55/175 of 19 December 2000 on the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel. It is clear that the strengthening of and adequate support for the United Nations Security Coordinator and the United Nations operational agencies will be required for effective security management and to optimize safety and security of staff. In this regard, in General Assembly resolution 55/175, Member States called for expeditious consideration of the Secretary-General's recommendation to appoint a full-time United Nations Security Coordinator.

106. Failure to address security issues endangers and costs the lives not only of humanitarian workers but also the vulnerable populations they assist. After the attack on the Atambua UNHCR compound and slaughtering of three UNHCR workers in West Timor on 6 September 2000, the United Nations and intergovernmental organizations evacuated all international staff from West Timor. Security Council resolution 1319 (2000) of 8 September 2000 laid down the conditions that the Government of Indonesia must meet before humanitarian aid will resume. Until this occurs, some 85,000 refugees are waiting in camps, many of which are in areas controlled by militia, adding to fears for their safety.

107. Recognizing that the United Nations and its non-United Nations humanitarian partners operate in the same complex crises environments, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee has endorsed the recommendations of a task force on staff security which are aimed at increasing the security collaboration at the field level between the United Nations and non-governmental organizations. The recommendations deal with cooperation in the areas of training, use of common communications, joint security planning, information sharing and context analysis.

108. Security is indispensable but it requires the financial support of Governments. In many cases, staff security is clearly limited by the amount of resources for security. United Nations country teams need to be given the resources to do their jobs more safely. Discussions are ongoing with Member States to ensure that the funds needed to cover the minimum requirements to strengthen staff security are provided. Staff security requirements have to be placed on a solid and stable financial basis and Member States are encouraged to make that commitment. This will clearly highlight the priority that both the Secretary-General and the Member States place on the safety of United Nations humanitarian staff.

C. The "war economy" in humanitarian emergencies

109. A characteristic of many of the situations in which the humanitarian community is involved is the almost total erosion of central authority. In these circumstances, humanitarian actors witness a number of new local dynamics that can impact on the humanitarian situation, including the emergence of a "war economy". Dilapidated infrastructure, the absence of political or social vision and the increasing, if not total disrespect for, governing bodies has resulted in the growing estrangement of these governance structures from many portions of the areas they nominally control, particularly in resource rich areas. The vacuum left by a weak political and administrative

authority in resource rich areas allows alternative structures to emerge and gain total control of economic assets. These alternative structures are frequently disinterested in issues of governance and, more often than not, in areas of conflict, are the instigators and promoters of violence. This is particularly so if the resources relate to illegal trade, such as narcotics. Other "war economies" can develop, such as trafficking in arms or misappropriation and sale of humanitarian assistance. Some have benefited from globalization and the role of international investors who provide the means to sustain their influence, such as arms and other logistics.

110. These alternative power structures also trample on the authority exercised by community leaders. The conflict environments dominated by economic strongmen can often extend to a form of fragmented and localized violence as smaller players gain power through the exploitation of local resources and manipulation of local civilian populations. In many of the current conflict situations, such as Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone, local strongmen have a vested interest in the perpetuation of instability and may view the re-establishment of strong administrative or governance structures as threatening to their objectives.

111. Meaningful humanitarian programmes must take this into account and be informed by the context, involving representatives of beneficiary populations in programme design. Increased support for community coping mechanisms and the empowerment of traditional community leadership through funding of local community initiatives is also important. In the same vein, the efforts of human rights and other actors to bolster and strengthen the rule of law and administration of justice should be encouraged and supported. There is a shared responsibility by all parts of the United Nations to promote climates of accountability for criminality and human rights abuse.

D. Sanctions

112. Sanctions regimes continue to pose an increasingly difficult dilemma for the United Nations dual mandate of preserving peace and protecting human needs. As the Secretary-General noted, humanitarian and human rights policy goals cannot easily be reconciled with those of sanctions regimes.[3] Economic sanctions are too often a blunt instrument[4] and may impose hardships on a civilian population that are disproportionate to likely political gains. A general consciousness has evolved within the Security Council that, further collective actions in the Security Council within the context of any further sanctions regime should be directed to minimize unintended adverse side effects of sanctions on the most vulnerable segments of targeted countries.[5] In its resolution 1325 (1999), the Security Council made particular reference to bearing in mind the special needs of women and girls in considering appropriate humanitarian exemptions. It is imperative that strategies for mitigating adverse humanitarian impacts on vulnerable populations be incorporated from the very beginning.

113. The Security Council has responded positively to this challenge and has increasingly used more targeted sanctions, such as in Afghanistan, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The Security Council is using monitoring and reporting mechanisms to assess the humanitarian implications of the sanctions regime imposed on Afghanistan. This development has helped to address some of the concerns about the involvement of the United Nations in sanctions-related suffering.

E. Linkages between relief and rehabilitation and development in post-conflict and natural disaster situations

114. The importance of linking relief and development activities is reflected in General Assembly resolution 46/182 and has also been reiterated by the Economic and Social Council in its agreed conclusions of 1998 and 1999. It is also a key preoccupation of the United Nations system. In both natural disasters and complex emergencies, the issue of relief and rehabilitation must be considered from the outset and development tools applied at the earliest. The United Nations inter-agency transitional appeal has been used as a tool in several emergencies, including for the aftermath of the El Salvador earthquakes, in an attempt to highlight and fill an existing relief to development gap. Based on varying responses from donors, this tool is currently being further refined. Both the common country assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework processes offer opportunities to identify and implement transitional strategies and require coherence in the immediate and longer-term analysis, planning and programming. The United Nations is exploring ways, through the Brookings

Process, of improving implementation partnerships among donors, agencies, Governments and civil society, namely to make use of the available aid resources and instruments and to divide responsibilities among partners.

115. The biggest threat to the transition to sustainable development is conflict. In May 2001, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee has engaged in broad consultations on the issue of post-conflict reintegration to identify ways to promote and support transitional initiatives, particularly with respect to the analysis, vision, strategy and teamwork of coordination structures. Their implementation will involve links to other post-conflict-related activities and the development of a compendium of field-based transitional-related practices and experiences and an interactive web site. Also crucial to the transition to sustainable development is the successful disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants. The Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs has given guidance on the coordination, the institutional division of labour and on how to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations at the field and headquarters level to deal with this issue.

116. Another key challenge in bridging this gap is gaining the interest of Governments and other non-United Nations actors in the process. Governments have emphasized that development actors should be brought in as early as possible in formulating a common humanitarian action plan through the consolidated appeals process, but have stated that their own early involvement was also critical. They have noted that coherence is needed from the Member States in the governing boards of various United Nations bodies and from international financial institutions (Bretton Woods institutions) to promote complementary strategic programming. They have added that donors should also continue to explore innovative methods to overcome constraints to funding transition activities, such as through establishing special funding mechanisms for the transitional recovery phase.

F. Administrative issues

1. Rules and procedures in emergencies of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

117. By resolution 46/182, the General Assembly decided that special emergency rules and procedures should be developed by the United Nations to enable all organizations quickly to disburse emergency funds, procure emergency supplies and equipment and recruit emergency staff. In order to resolve, within the parameters of existing United Nations administrative procedures, the majority of problems which impeded rapid response to emergencies, the Emergency Relief Coordinator requested the Secretary-General to approve a delegation of authority for the use of extrabudgetary funding to support the field in humanitarian emergencies in the areas of finance, procurement and recruitment of emergency personnel.

118. In 1999, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs was granted delegation of authority to issue financial authorizations and accept donor contributions without the approval of the United Nations Central Services. Arrangements were also made for the Office to draw upon dedicated support of the Geneva Central Administrative Services to ensure rapid deployment of personnel and equipment in emergency situations. These measures proved very useful in streamlining administrative actions during emergencies, although the Office continues to encounter difficulties in providing speedy support. In its 2000 humanitarian segment, the Economic and Social Council called for special administrative rules and procedures to allow the United Nations to provide personnel and logistics to respond to humanitarian needs. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs completed a review of administrative procedures in emergencies and, based on the experience of recent humanitarian operations, recommended specific changes to address shortcomings. These include an enhanced delegation of authority and further streamlining of administrative procedures during the initial phase of an emergency, for recruiting emergency personnel and conducting financial transactions and procurement in the field. The recommendations are currently being considered by the relevant offices of the United Nations Central Services, in consultation with the Office.

119. However, delegation of authority and special administrative procedures alone cannot guarantee effective response in emergencies if they are not complemented by emergency preparedness and response mechanisms. Based on its recent internal review process, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is strengthening its administrative support to the field and enhancing its surge capacity to respond in a more timely and effective manner to emergencies.

2. Financial situation of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

120. In the current biennium, the estimated extrabudgetary resources represent 89.5 per cent and the regular budget 10.5 per cent of the overall resources required by the Office, as compared with 89.1 and 10.9 per cent, respectively, in the biennium 1998-1999. For the Office's proposed programme budget for the forthcoming biennium, the Secretary-General has proposed a growth of 5.6 per cent over the 2000-2001 appropriations. Despite this increase, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs continues to rely heavily on extrabudgetary resources, from which all of its field activities are funded. Donor support remains critical for the Office, particularly in funding some of the headquarters projects and field coordination requirements, which have remained consistently underfunded. As requested by a number of Member States, efforts should continue to secure a sustainable financial base for the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

VI. Observations and recommendations

121. The broad nature of the present report illustrates the diversity of issues faced by the United Nations and its humanitarian partners, over the ten years since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 46/182 and some of the new humanitarian challenges and opportunities that have arisen. The sheer number of humanitarian organizations and the variety of activities they undertake testifies to the need for continuing to strengthen humanitarian coordination mechanisms, but the humanitarian environment and the context for their work have also changed, making extra demands on the system. Complex emergencies are increasingly characterized by internal conflicts with a multiplicity of parties and interests involved. Of note is the role of some "war economies" in perpetuating conflicts. Conflict-induced displacement has become larger, more complex and geographically widespread. Civilians are increasingly targeted and engaged in the conflict. Humanitarian workers themselves are operating closer to conflict areas than ever before, at enormous risk and with unacceptable losses. Nonetheless, huge numbers of vulnerable populations still remain difficult to access and assist. At the same time, natural disasters have occurred more frequently and repeatedly struck certain regions, sometimes in such quick succession that recovery processes have barely begun before the next crisis hits. Not only are they more frequent but also more damaging and more costly, both in human and financial terms, particularly in developing countries. Societies have become more vulnerable to disasters for a number of reasons, including poverty, poor planning and limited prevention, preparedness and response mechanisms.

122. The decade has offered opportunities for more rapid and efficient response to humanitarian emergencies. While the range of humanitarian actors has placed enormous demands on coordination mechanisms, it has also enabled more far-reaching response through consolidated efforts. Much more focus has been placed on strengthening the capacity of Governments and local communities in disaster-prone areas to prepare for and respond to crises and to mitigate potential damage. Regional mechanisms have begun to play an important role in coordinated responses to natural disasters and complex emergencies, but their full potential has yet to be realized. The approach to coordinated response to crises has become more strategic. Links to rehabilitation and development have been made earlier in the planning process, but gaps still exist. The more timely participation of development actors and improved donor funding through the transition period are required. In conflict situations, a higher degree of coherence has been achieved between the political, peacekeeping, humanitarian and human rights operations. But again, more is required, particularly to ensure full support and respect for the humanitarian imperative and principles in such circumstances.

123. Technology has improved, allowing more rapid and precise assessments of the consequences of emergencies. Better information management has enabled vital information to be more easily pooled and

then accessed by a broader range of actors. However, the humanitarian community is still at quite an early stage with regard to harnessing and utilizing all the advantages that technology could offer for more efficient and coordinated humanitarian response. The private sector has responded generously to the United Nations request for assistance but could be more closely engaged to develop more widespread corporate responsibility and suggest avenues for positive support. In all these efforts, the support of Member States is key. Despite the improvements over the last ten years in coordinated humanitarian response, the decade has demonstrated that humanitarian action is not a substitute for political action. Without concerted political and diplomatic efforts, many crises cannot be adequately resolved.

124. The tools and mechanisms established by General Assembly resolution 46/182 have proved their effectiveness throughout the decade, although they would benefit from further strengthening and refinement. Meeting the remaining challenges requires the ongoing engagement of Member States, the United Nations humanitarian entities and their partners. It also requires a reinforced commitment on the part of Member States to guarantee the necessary resources, in a stable and predictable way, to ensure a strong coordinated response to humanitarian emergencies.

125. In this regard, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council may wish:

Strengthening further coordination of humanitarian assistance

(a) To invite Member States and humanitarian organizations to support the efforts of the Emergency Relief Coordinator in discharging his functions, including negotiating improved access to vulnerable populations, in order to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance;

(b) To support the strengthening of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee in its efforts to improve the coordinated response to humanitarian emergencies;

(c) To invite the General Assembly to consider favourably the recommendations of the Secretary-General for the more efficient utilization of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund, in particular, with regard to its use to support humanitarian assistance in natural disasters, protracted emergencies and security arrangements for United Nations and associated personnel;

(d) To urge Member States to coordinate the allocation of resources to the consolidated appeals process and ensure balanced funding for the entire package of projects;

(e) To invite Member States to pay particular attention to funding staff security through various channels, including the consolidated appeals process;

(f) To invite donor Governments to consider ways and means to ensure timely funding of transitional activities, including providing the necessary resources to enable crisis-affected populations to resume economic and other self-help activities as soon as possible;

(g) To call upon Member States to support initiatives that encourage the sharing and dissemination of information among humanitarian organizations and Governments and the increased use of information technologies to strengthen further the humanitarian crisis preparedness and response capacities, particularly in developing countries;

Prevention, preparedness and response

(h) To request the international community to provide more support for strengthening regional and national prevention, preparedness and response capabilities, through, inter alia, the provision of technical and financial assistance;

(i) To encourage Member States and regional bodies to develop and maintain humanitarian contingency plans for natural disasters and environmental and complex crises, with the support of United Nations resident/humanitarian coordinators and the United Nations country teams;

(j) To take note of the work of regional United Nations disaster assessment and coordination teams for coordinating humanitarian assistance during humanitarian emergencies and invite Member States to support the efforts of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to establish regional teams for Africa and Asia;

(k) To encourage Member States in regions prone to earthquakes to participate in the regional activities of the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group, both to enhance their national

preparedness to respond to earthquakes and to strengthen their capacities to engage in regional and international search and rescue response structures;

(l) To encourage Member States to support the efforts of the United Nations and its humanitarian partners to undertake "lessons learned" and evaluation studies on the responses to natural disasters and complex emergencies, with a view to strengthening the system's future responses;

Groups with special needs

(m) To encourage Member States to recognize the positive role that crisis-affected populations can play in the provision of humanitarian assistance, and in subsequent rehabilitation and peace-building activities;

(n) To invite Members States to consider, in particular, ways that women's groups may be supported and enhanced to allow them to play the fullest possible role in initiatives aimed at promoting peace, security, respect for human rights and development;

(o) To encourage Member States to support the Secretary-General's efforts to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations system to address the needs of internally displaced persons in a coordinated manner, in the overall context of its humanitarian programmes;

(p) To encourage Member States to protect the rights of children and address their development needs, particularly with respect to their access to basic health and education services, both during and after conflict, as part of the effort to achieve long-term recovery and reconstruction;

(q) To encourage all international humanitarian actors to provide gender training for all staff to ensure that relevant gender perspectives are integrated into all areas of humanitarian work.

Notes

[1] S/2001/331.

[2] The Geographic Information Support is a United Nations-led ad hoc working group comprising the major United Nations humanitarian programmes, specialized agencies and other bodies (the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Food Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Bank, and donor agencies, such as the United States Agency for International Development and the European Union.

[3] See the 1998 report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization, *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-third Session, Supplement No. 1* (A/53/1).

[4] Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council, dated 13 April 1998, on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/52/871-S/1998/318).

[5] S/1995/300, annex I.